

A. Lincoln.

LIFE  
OF  
ABRAHAM  
LINCOLN.

HOLLAND.

HOLLAND

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*A. Lincoln*

A LINCOLN







*The Chubbuck Eng. Springfield Mass.*

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HOME OF LINCOLN,  
SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

Mary Miller

# LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE early life of ABRAHAM LINCOLN was a hard and humble backwoods and border life. As a boy and as a young man, he was not fond of wild sports and exciting adventures. It is doubtless true that the earlier years of many of his neighbors and companions would be more engaging to the pen of the biographer and the imagination of the reader, than his. His later career, his noble character, his association with the grandest and most important events of American history, have alone, or mainly, given significance and interest to his youthful experiences of hardship, the humble processes of his education, and his early struggles with the rough forces of nature among which he was born. The tree which rose so high, and spread its leaves so broadly, and bore such golden fruit, and then fell before the blast because it was so heavy and so high, has left its roots upturned into the same light that glorified its branches, and discovered and made divine the soil from which it drew its nutriment.

When Mr. Lincoln was nominated for the presidency of the United States in 1860, it became desirable that a sketch of his life should be prepared and widely distributed; but, upon being applied to for materials for this sketch, by the gentleman who had undertaken to produce it,\* he seemed oppressed

\*J. L. Scripps, Esq., of Chicago.

with a sense of their tameness and lowliness, and the conviction that they could not be of the slightest interest to the American people. "My early history," said he, "is perfectly characterized by a single line of Gray's *Elegy* :

'The short and simple annals of the poor.'"

His judgment then was measurably just ; but events have set it aside, and endowed the humble details that seemed to him so common-place and mean, with a profound and tender interest.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born in that part of Hardin County, Kentucky, now embraced by the lines of the recently formed county of Larue, on the 12th of February, 1809. A region more remarkably picturesque was at that time hardly to be found in all the newly-opened country of the West. Variegated and rolling in its surface, about two-thirds of it timbered and fertile, the remainder composed of barrens, supporting only black-jacks and post-oaks, and spreading into plains, or rising into knolls or knobs, and watered by beautiful and abundant streams, it was as attractive to the eye of the lover of nature as to the enterprise of the agriculturist and the passion of the hunter. Some of the knobs rising out of the barrens reach a considerable elevation, and are dignified by the name of mountains. "Shiny Mountain" is one of the most lovely of these, giving a view of the whole valley of the Nolin. A still larger knob is the "Blue Ball," from whose summit one may see, on a fair morning, the fog rising from the Ohio River, thirty miles away.

In a rude log cabin, planted among these scenes, the subject of this biography opened his eyes. The cabin was situated on or near Nolin Creek, about a mile and a half from Hodgenville, the present county seat of Larne County. Here he spent the first year or two of his childhood, when he removed to a cabin on Knob Creek, on the road from Bardstown, Kentucky, to Nashville, Tennessee ; at a point three and a half miles south or southwest of Atherton's Ferry, (on the Rolling Fork,) and six miles from Hodgenville. It was in

these two homes\* that he spent the first seven years of his life ; but before saying anything of those years, it will be best to tell how his parents found their way into the wilderness, and to record what is known of his family history.

In 1769, Daniel Boone, at the head of a small and hardy party of adventurers, set out from his home on the Yadkin River, in South Carolina, to explore that part of Virginia which he then knew as "The Country of Kentucky." After participating in the most daring and dangerous adventures, and suffering almost incredible hardships, he returned, abundantly rewarded with peltry, in 1771. Two years after this, he undertook to remove his family to the region which had entirely captivated his imagination ; but it was not until 1775 that his purpose was accomplished. This brave and widely-renowned pioneer, with those who accompanied him and those who were attracted to the region by the reports which he had carried back to the Eastern settlements, lived a life of constant exposure to Indian warfare ; but danger seemed only to sharpen the spirit of adventure, and to attract rather than repel immigration.

Among those for whom "The Country of Kentucky" had its savage charms was Abraham Lincoln, the grandfather of the President, then living in Rockingham County, Virginia. Why he should have left the beautiful and fertile valley of the Shenandoah for the savage wilds West of him cannot be known, but he only repeated the mystery of pioneer life—the greed for something newer and wilder and more dangerous than that which surrounded him. His removal to Kentucky took place about 1780. Of the journey, we have no record ; but we know that at that date it must have been one of great hardship, as he was accompanied by a young and tender family. The spot upon which he built is not known,

\*Mr. Lincoln, in the manuscript record of his life dictated to J. G. Nicolay, makes mention of but one home in Kentucky. Scripps' memoir, also gathered from Mr. Lincoln's lips is silent on the subject ; but Barrett's Campaign Life of Lincoln gives the statement circumstantially, and is probably correct.



though it is believed to have been somewhere on Floyd's Creek, in what is now Bullitt County. Hardly more of his history is preserved than that which relates to his death. In 1784, while at work in the field, at a distance from his cabin, he was stealthily approached by an Indian, and shot dead.

The care of five helpless children was, by this murder, thrown upon his widow. She subsequently removed to a place now embraced within the limits of Washington County, and there she reared, in such rude ways as necessity prescribed, her little brood. Three of these children, sons, were named in the order of their birth, Mordecai, Josiah and Thomas. The two daughters were named respectively Mary and Nancy. Mordecai remained in Kentucky until late in life, but a short time before his death, removed to Hancock county, Illinois, where several of his descendants still reside. Josiah, the second son, removed while a young man to what is now Harrison County, Indiana. Thomas, the third son, was the father of Abraham Lincoln, the illustrious subject of this biography. Mary Lincoln was married to Ralph Crume, and Nancy to William Brumfield. The descendants of these women still reside in Kentucky. All these children were probably born in Virginia,—Thomas, in 1778,—so that he was only about two years old when his father emigrated.

Tracing the family still farther, we find that Abraham, the emigrant, had four brothers: Isaac, Jacob, John and Thomas. The descendants of Jacob and John are supposed to be still in Virginia. Isaac, emigrated to the region where Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee unite, and his descendants are there. Thomas went to Kentucky, probably later than his brother Abraham, where he lived many years, and where he died. His descendants went to Missouri.

Further back than this it is difficult to go. The most that is known, is, that the Lincolns of Rockingham County, Virginia, came, previous to 1752, from Berks County, Pennsylvania. Where the Lincolns of Berks County came from, no record has disclosed. They are believed to have been Quakers, but whether they were an original importation from Old Eng-

land, under the auspices of William Penn, or a pioneer offshoot from the Lincolns of New England, does not appear. There is the strongest presumptive evidence that the Pennsylvania and New England Lincolns were identical in their family blood. The argument for this identity rests mainly upon the coincidences which the Christian names of the two families present. Three Lincolns who came from Hingham, in England, and settled in Hingham, Massachusetts, between 1633 and 1637, bore the Christian name of Thomas. Another bore the name of Samuel, and he had three sons: Daniel, Mordecai and Thomas. Mordecai was the father of Mordecai, who was born in 1686. He was also the father of Abraham, born in 1689. About 1750, there were two Mordecai Lincolns in the town of Taunton.\* Here we have the three names: Mordecai, Thomas and Abraham, in frequent and familiar family use. Passing to the Pennsylvania family, we find that among the taxable inhabitants of Exeter, Berks County, Pennsylvania, there were, soon after 1752, Mordecai and Abraham Lincoln; that Thomas Lincoln was living in Reading as early as 1757, and that Abraham Lincoln, of Berks County, was in various public offices in the state from 1782 to 1790.†

It has already been seen that these names have been perpetuated among the later generations of the Pennsylvania Lincolns, and that the three names of Abraham, Mordecai and Thomas were all embraced in the family out of which the President sprang. The argument thus based upon the identity of favorite family names (and one of those quite an unusual one,) is a very strong one in establishing identity of blood, though, of course, it is not entirely conclusive. It is sufficient, certainly, in the absence of a reliable record, to make the theory plausible which transfers a Quaker from the unfriendly soil of Massachusetts to the paradise of Quakers in Pennsylvania. It is highly probable that an exceptional

\*Rev. Elias Nason's Eulogy before the N. E. Historic-Geneological Society, at Boston, May 3, 1865.

†Rupp's History of Berks and Lebanon Counties, Pennsylvania.

Quaker among the Massachusetts Puritan family went, with other New Englanders, to Berks County in Pennsylvania, and that the blood which has given to New England a considerable number of most honorable names, has given to the nation one of the noblest that adorn its annals.

Thomas Lincoln, the father of the President, was made, by the early death of his father and the straitened circumstances of his mother, a wandering, laboring, ignorant boy. He grew up without any education. He really never learned anything of letters except those which composed his own name. This he could write clumsily, but legibly, and this he did write without any knowledge of the names and powers of the letters which composed it. While a lad not fully grown, he passed a year as a hired field hand on Wataga, a branch of the Holston River, in the employ of his Uncle Isaac. Without money or the opportunity to acquire it, all the early years of his life were passed in labor for others, at such wages as he could command, or in hunting the game with which the region abounded. It was not until he had reached his twenty-eighth year that he found it practicable to settle in life, and make for himself a home. He married Nancy Hanks, in 1806. She was born in Virginia, and was probably a relative of one of the early immigrants into Kentucky. He took her to the humble cabin he had prepared for her, already alluded to as the birth-place of the President, and within the first few years of her married life, she bore him three children. The first was a daughter named Sarah, who grew up, married, and died many years ago, leaving no child. The third was a son, who died in infancy. The second was Abraham, who, born into the humblest abode, under the humblest circumstances, raised himself by the force of native gifts of heart and brain, and by the culture and power achieved by his own will and industry, under the blessing of a Providence which he always recognized, to sit in the highest place in the land, and to preside over the destinies of thirty millions of people.

From such materials as are readily accessible, let us paint a picture of the little family. Thomas Lincoln, the father,



was a slender, sinewy man, about five feet ten and a half inches high, dressed in the humble garb which his poverty compelled and the rude art of the time and locality produced. Though a rover by habit and native tastes, he was not a man of enterprise. He was a good-natured man, a man of undoubted integrity, but inefficient in making his way in the world, and improvident of the slender means at his command. He was a man, however, whom everybody loved, and who held the warm affection of his eminent son throughout his life. He attributed much of his hard fortune to his lack of education, and in one thing, at least, showed himself more wisely provident than the majority of his neighbors. He determined, at any possible sacrifice, to give his children the best education that the schools of the locality afforded.

Mrs. Lincoln, the mother, was evidently a woman out of place among those primitive surroundings. She was five feet, five inches high, a slender, pale, sad and sensitive woman, with much in her nature that was truly heroic, and much that shrank from the rude life around her. A great man never drew his infant life from a purer or more womanly bosom than her own; and Mr. Lincoln always looked back to her with an unspeakable affection. Long after her sensitive heart and weary hands had crumbled into dust, and had climbed to life again in forest flowers, he said to a friend, with tears in his eyes: "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother—blessings on her memory!"

Here was the home and here were its occupants, all humble, all miserably poor; yet it was a home of love and of virtue. Both father and mother were religious persons, and sought at the earliest moment to impress the minds of their children with religious truth. The mother, though not a ready writer, could read. Books were scarce, but occasionally an estray was caught, and eagerly devoured. Abraham and his sister often sat at her feet to hear of scenes and deeds that roused their young imaginations, and fed their hungry minds.

Schools in Kentucky were, in those days, scarce and very

poor. Nothing more than instruction in the rudiments of education was attempted. Zachariah Riney was Abraham's first teacher. Riney was a Catholic, and though the Protestant children in his charge were commanded, or permitted, to retire when any of his peculiar religious ceremonies or exercises were in progress, Mr. Lincoln always entertained a pleasant and grateful memory of him. He began his attendance upon Mr. Riney's school when he was in his seventh year, but could hardly have continued it beyond a period of two or three months. His next teacher was Caleb Hazel, a fine young man, whose school he attended for about three months. The boy was diligent, and actually learned to write an intelligible letter during this period.

If the schools of the region were rude and irregular, its religious institutions were still more so. Public religious worship was observed in the neighborhood only at long intervals, and then under the charge of roving preachers, who, ranging over immense tracts of territory, and living on their horses and in the huts of the settlers, called the people together under trees or cabin-roofs, and spoke to them simply of the great truths of Christianity. The preachers themselves were peculiar persons, made so by the peculiarity of their circumstances and pursuits. For many years, Abraham Lincoln never saw a church; but he heard Parson Elkin preach. At intervals of several months, the good parson held meetings in the neighborhood. He was a Baptist, and Thomas and Nancy Lincoln were members of that communion. Abraham's first ideas of public speech were gathered from the simple addresses of this humble and devoted itinerant, and the boy gave evidence afterwards, as we shall see, that he remembered him with interest and affection.

When inefficient men become very uncomfortable, they are quite likely to try emigration as a remedy. A good deal of what is called "the pioneer spirit" is simply a spirit of shiftless discontent. Possibly there was something of this spirit in Thomas Lincoln. It is true, at least, that when Abraham was about seven years old, his father became possessed with

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1895

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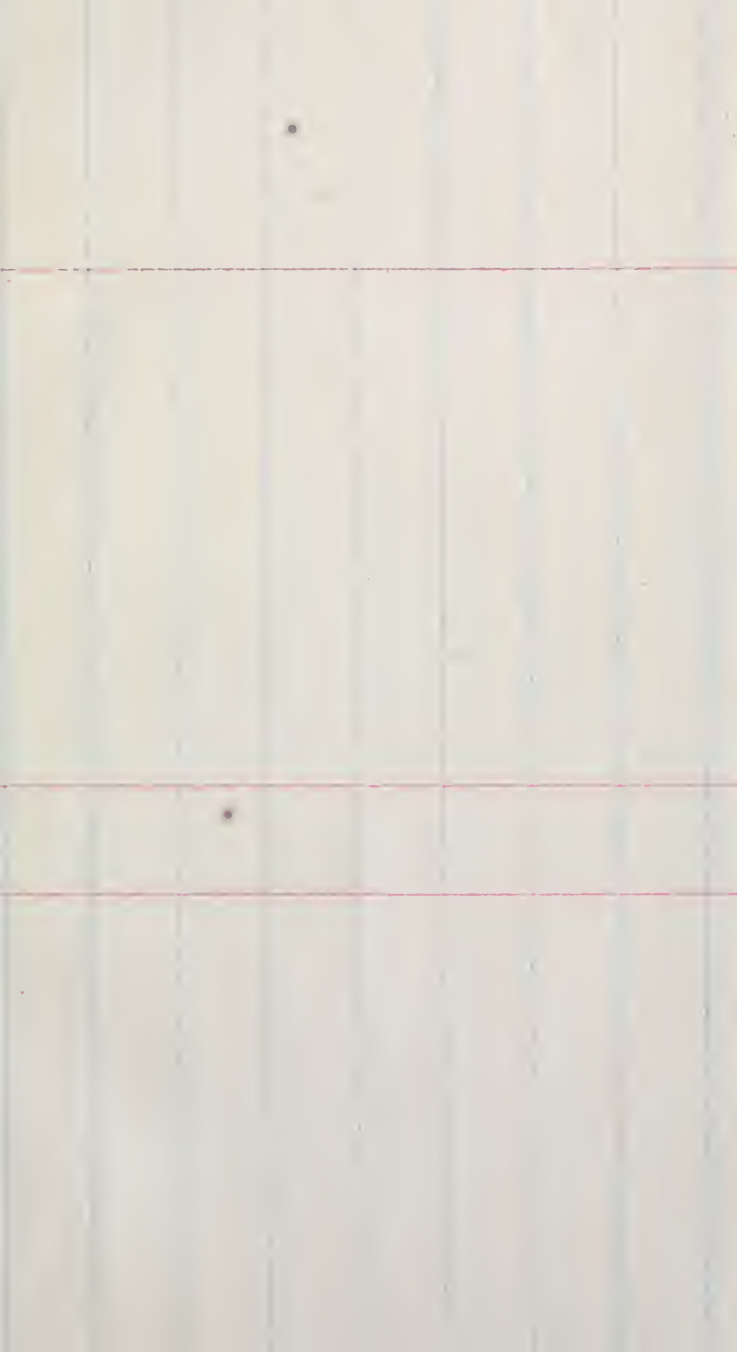
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